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Plumptre, &c. &c.

The divina commedia.
Samples of a new translation

London. 1883.



C. North with the Translator,
June 29. 1883. *Compliments*

THE

DIVINA COMMEDIA

OF

DANTE ALIGHIERI.

SAMPLES OF
A NEW TRANSLATION.

Edward Hayes BY
E. H. PLUMPTRE, D.D.,
DEAN OF WELLS.

"The reading of Dante is not merely a pleasure, a *tour de force*, or a lesson; it is a vigorous discipline for the heart, the intellect, the whole man He who labours for Dante labours to serve Italy, Christianity, the World."

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1881, Nov. 26

*Gift of
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80

RICHARD WILLIAM CHURCH, D.D.,
DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S.

—♦—

THINE was the hand first led me to the page
Of the much vext, much conquering Florentine,
And taught me in that Comedy Divine
To find the man, the prophet, and the sage ;
And now, as manhood passes into age,
The struggle and the blessing have been mine
To follow step by step, and line by line,
The course of that transcendent pilgrimage.
The forest wild, foul stream, and drear abyss,
The sunlit ocean, and the mountain fair,
The wondrous circles of the souls in bliss,
Where light and music tremble in the air :
These lie before thee. Seems it overbold
This newest way to pay that debt of old ?

SAN REMO,

January 12th, 1883.

P R E F A C E.

SOME thirty years have passed since my thoughts were first turned to the study of the *Divina Commedia* by Dean Church's masterly essay on Dante. For the last fifteen years I have given such intervals of leisure as were possible in a somewhat busy life to the translation of that poem in a form which is at least analogous to that of the original. The work, as it went on, has been in a large measure its own reward, leading me into closer fellowship with the greatest poet of mediæval Christendom, often bringing with it the sense of elevation and refreshment amid the sorrows and anxieties of daily life. Now that it is finished, there comes the question whether it is likely to be helpful to other students of the great Florentine, or to make him better known to those who have not hitherto been students. A translator is liable to a subtle self-deception in this matter, and is apt to infer from the satisfaction which he has felt in the progress of his work, the probability of a like satisfaction in his readers in the result of his labours. Translators of Dante are already numerous. Is it worth while to add another to the list?

I have thought it prudent to submit that question to the judgment of those who are qualified to form an estimate of the merits or defects of the following samples, and am content to be guided by their opinions. Possibly it may be with me as it was with Bunyan :

“ Some said, ‘ John, print it ; ’ others said, ‘ Not so,’ ”

and in that case I must do my best to count and weigh the suffrages.

Should the scales turn in favour of publication, I purpose adding such critical and historical notes as are necessary to the English reader, and an Introductory Essay on the Life and Times of Dante. A translation of the Minor Poems is also ready for the press.

E. H. P.

Rome, Feb. 6th, 1883.



INFERNO.

CANTO I.

WHEN our life's course with me had half-way sped,
I found myself in gloomy forest dell,
For the straight onward path was vanishèd.
Ah me ! how hard it were in words to tell
What was that wood, wild, drear, and tangled o'er,
Which e'en in thought renews my terror's spell !
So bitter is it, death were little more !
But of the good that there I found to speak
I'll tell what else came there mine eyes before.
How I there entered, this is yet to seek,
So sleep-opprest was I in that same hour
When from the true path I away did break ;
But when I reached a point where high did tower
A mount, where to its end that valley came
Which pierced my heart with terror's torturing power,
I looked on high, and lo ! its slopes became
As clothed with brightness from that planet's ray
Which for all others truest paths doth frame.
Then for a while did peace the fear allay
That in my heart's deep fountain came and went,
All the sad night I passed in such dismay.
And e'en as one who panting, worn, and spent,
From the deep sea escaping to the shore,
Turns to the perilous waves with gaze intent,
So did my soul, which still fled evermore,
Turn back to gaze upon the path behind
Which ne'er till now did living man pass o'er.

And when I had my weary frame reclined,
 Once more I started through the desert plain,
 The firmer foot being still below inclined.
 And lo ! just as the sloping side I gain
 A supple panther, lithe, exceeding fleet,
 Whose skin full many a dusky spot did stain :
 Nor did it from before my face retreat,
 But hindered so my journey on the way,
 That many a time I backward turned my feet.
 The hour was that of earliest dawn of day,
 And the sun mounted high with each same star
 Which with him was when Love's divinest sway
 Moved at the first those orbs that beauteous are ;
 So that good ground for fair hope met me here
 From that bright spotted beast I saw afar,
 The hour of day, and season sweet of year :
 Yet not so much so but that fear did bring
 The aspect of a lion drawing near.
 He seemed as if against me he would spring
 With head upraised, and hunger fierce and wild,
 So that the air thereat seemed shuddering.
 Then a she-wolf with all ill greed defiled,
 And in its hungry leanness terrible,
 That many nations of their peace had spoiled.
 And thereupon such terror on me fell,
 With dread that came from that ill-boding sight,
 That I lost hope to do my mounting well.
 And e'en as one who gains with great delight,
 When the time comes that makes him lose his prey,
 In all his thoughts weeps, filled with sore despite,
 So that fierce beast, who ne'er at rest did stay,
 Now meeting me, by slow degrees and sure
 Thrust me where dark and silent is the day.
 And as I fell back in that clime obscure
 Before mine eyes there seemed a form to glide
 Whose voice, through silence long, seemed hoarse and poor,
 And when I saw him in that desert wide,
 "Have pity on me" I to him did cry,
 "Whether in thee, or shade, or man, is spied."
 And he made answer, "Man no more am I ;
 Man I was once ; my parents Lombards were,
 And both to Mantua traced their ancestry.

Sub Julio I was born though late the year,
And lived at Rome beneath Augustus good
While yet false gods and lying made men fear.

72

A poet I, and sang the rectitude
Of great Anchises' son, who came from Troy,
When haughty Ilion was by fire subdued.

But thou, why turn'st thou back to such annoy ?
Why climb'st thou not yon mountain of delight,
Which is the source and spring of all our joy ? "

73

" What ! Art thou Virgil, thou that fountain bright,
Which pours of full clear eloquence the tide ? "

I answered him with look of reverence right.

" O, of all other bards the light and pride,
Own thou the study long and love intense
Which I to that thy volume have applied.

74

Thou art my master, guide in every sense,
And thou alone art he from whom I drew
The goodly style to which men praise dispense.

Thou seest the beast that back my footsteps threw ;
Give me thine aid against her, famous seer,
For she with fear doth veins and pulse imbue."

75

" 'Tis meet thy steps to other course should veer,"
He answered, when he saw me weeping sore,
" If thou wilt 'scape this region wild and drear :

For that fell beast whose spite thou wailest o'er
Lets no man onward pass along her way
But so doth hinder that he lives no more,

76

And is of mood so evil, fierce to slay,
That never doth she sate her hunger dread,
And after feeding craves yet more for prey.

Many the creatures are that with her wed,
And will be more, until the Greyhound come
Who with sharp agony shall smite her dead.

77

He shall not crave broad lands or pelf at home,
But wisdom, virtue, charity shall love,
And 'twixt two Feltros shall his people roam.

Of low Italia shall he saviour prove
For which of old the maid Camilla died,
Nisus, Euryalus and Turnus strove.

78

He through each town shall chase her far and wide,
Until he drive her back to deepest hell,
Whence she at Envy's primal bidding hied.

Wherefore for thee I think and judge 'tis well
 That thou should'st follow, I thy leader be,
 And guide thee hence where shades eternal dwell,
 Where thou shalt hear sharp wail of misery,
 Shall see the ancient spirits in their pain,
 Who for the second death in anguish cry :
 Those thou shalt see who, in the hope to gain,
 When the hour comes, the blest ones' happier clime,
 Can bear the torturing fire, nor yet complain.
 To these would'st thou with eager footsteps climb,
 A soul shall guide thee worthier far than I :
 With her I'll leave thee when to part 'tis time.
 For that great Emperor who reigns on high,
 Because I lived a rebel to His will,
 Lets none through me within His city hie.
 Throughout the world He reigns, yet there rules still.
 There are His city and His lofty throne,
 Thrice blest whom He doth choose those courts to fill !”
 Then spake I : By the God thou hast not known,
 O Poet, I of thee a boon desire,
 That I may 'scape this woe, or worse unknown,
 That whither thou hast said thou lead me higher,
 So that St. Peter's gate in view I find,
 And those thou tell'st of in their torments dire ;”
 Then he moved onward, and I trod behind.

CANTO II.

THE day was closing, and the murky air
 Set free all forms of life on earth that dwell
 From toil ; I only did myself prepare
 To bear the brunt of all the conflict fell,
 As of the way, so also of the woe,
 Which now my mind, that errs not, will retell.
 Ye Muses, thou too, Genius, help me now ;
 O Mind that all did'st write I then did see,
 Here shall thy greatness yet more nobly show !

Then I began : " O Poet, guiding me,
Test well my courage, see if it avail,
Ere to that high task I am sent by thee.
The sire of Silvius, so thou tell'st the tale,
While yet in men's frail flesh, did reach the clime
Immortal, nor did sense corporeal fail.
If therefore the great Foe of every crime
Was thus benign to him, as knowing well
The who, the what, high end in far-off time,
Not unmeet seems it, where right reasonings dwell,
For he of our dear Rome and its great might
Was chosen Sire, in Heaven empyreal ;
And this and that, to speak the truth aright,
Were fixed and stablished for the Holy See
Where the great Peter's vicar sits of right ;
He, in that journey whence he won from thee
His glory, heard of things from whence did flow
His triumph, and the papal majesty.
There later did the Chosen Vessel go
To bring back comfort for that one true creed
Whence we the way of our salvation know.
But why should I go ? who will this concede ?
I nor *Æneas* am, nor yet am Paul,
Worthy of this nor I myself indeed,
Nor others count me ; wherefore, if I fall
In with this plan, I fear me lest it be
A journey vain. Wise art thou ; more than all
I speak thou knowest." And, behold, as he
Who wills and wills not, and by new thoughts tost,
Changes his plan, and from his task doth flee,
So stood I on that dusky hill-side lost ;
For musing still, the work all ran to waste
That at the outset sped its uttermost.
" If I have well thy words' true meaning traced,"
Then answered me that noble poet's shade,
" Thy soul is now with coward fear disgraced,
Which often hath man's spirit overweighed
So that it turns him from his high emprise,
As some false vision makes a beast afraid.
That thou from out this fear of thine may'st rise,
I, why I came and what I heard, will say,
When first I looked on thee with pitying eyes.

I was among the souls that hang midway,
 And lo ! a lady called me, blest and fair,
 So that I asked wherein I might obey. 54

Bright were her eyes beyond the Star's compare,
 And she began in accents soft and kind,
 With voice angelic, such as they speak there.

'O Mantuan spirit, thou of courteous mind,
 Whose fame doth still in yonder world endure,
 And while the world lasts still its place shall find, 60

My friend—not Fortune's—on the slope obscure
 And desolate, is so entangled there,
 That he through dread turns back from progress sure,

And much I fear lest he already fare
 So far astray that my help comes too late,
 From that which I in Heaven of him did hear. 66

Now rouse thyself, and with thy speech ornate,
 And with what skill to free him thou may'st know,
 Help him, nor leave me thus disconsolate.

I Beatricè am, who bid thee go ;
 And fain would I regain the heavenly land :
 Love moved me, and from love my speech doth flow. 72

When I in presence of my Lord shall stand
 By me thy praise shall oftentimes be shown.'
 Then she was silent : I to her demand

Replied :—'O virtuous lady, thou alone
 Dost raise mankind to pass the furthest height
 Of that bright Heaven by lesser circles known, 78

So much doth thy behest my soul delight,
 That service done, as slow would censure gain :
 Thou need'st not more thy purpose bring to light.

But tell the cause why thou dost not refrain
 From passing downward to this centre drear
 From that wide sphere thou longest to regain.' 84

"Of what thou seek'st so eagerly to hear,"
 She answered me, 'I briefly now will tell,
 Why I to enter here have felt no fear.

Of those things only fear in us should dwell
 Which have the power to work another's woe ;
 Of others not ; they are not terrible. 90

I by God's bounty have been fashioned so,
 That your great misery leaves me sound and whole,
 Nor touches me this fiery furnace' glow.

A gentle lady dwells in Heaven, whose soul
 So much that hindrance feels where thee I send,
 That God's stern judgment yields to her control. 96

She Lucia called, and bade her to attend,
 And said, 'Thy faithful one is now in need
 Of thee, and I to thee his cause commend.' 102

And Lucia, foe of each unpitying deed,
 Hastened, and thither came where with me stays
 Rachel, of whom in story old we read,
 And said, 'O Beatricè, God's true praise,
 Why help'st thou not the man that loves thee so,
 That he, for thy sake, left the vile herd's ways ?' 108

Dost thou not hear his piteous plaint of woe ?
 Dost thou not see the death he has to face,
 Where stormy floods that shame the sea's boast flow ?' 114

Ne'er in the world went men at such swift pace,
 Their good to gain, or from their loss retreat,
 As I, when I had heard such words of grace,
 Did take the downward path from my blest seat,
 In thy fair speech confiding, which brings praise
 To thee, and those who listen at thy feet.' 120

And when her tale she ended, then her gaze
 She turned away, eyes wet with many a tear;
 And so she made me come without delays.

And I, as she desired me, sought thee here,
 I made thee from before that fierce beast rise
 Which stopped quick climbing up that mountain fair. 126

What is it then? Why, why delay this wise ?
 Why doth such baseness in thine heart find place ?
 Why hast thou not bold zeal for high emprise ?

Since three such ladies, blest of God's dear grace,
 Care for thee in that heavenly company,
 And in my speech such promise thou may'st trace ?" 132

E'en as the flowers, beneath the night's cold sky,
 Bent down and closed, when sunrise makes them bright,
 With open blossoms lift their stalks on high,

So did I then, with my out-wearied might,
 And such good courage rose within my heart
 That I began, as freed from all affright : 138

"Oh, gracious she who did the helper's part,
 And courteous thou who did'st so soon obey
 The words of truth she did to thee impart :

Strong wish within my heart hath found its way,
 At those thy words, to journey on amain,
 So that my first resolve resumes its sway.
 On then, one only will is in us twain ;
 Thou Leader art, thou Lord, and thou my Guide.”
 So spake I, and when he moved on again,
 I too that pathway wild and dreary tried.

CANTO III.

“THROUGH me men reach the city of great woe,
 Through me men pass to endless misery,
 Through me men pass where all the lost ones go :
 Justice it was that moved my Maker high,
 The Power of God it was that fashioned me,
 Wisdom supreme and primal Charity.
 Before me nothing was of things that be,
 Save the eterne, and I eternal last :
 Ye that pass in, all hope abandon ye.”
 These words I saw in hue with gloom o’ercast
 Enwritten o’er the summit of a gate :
 “Master,” I said, “their drift makes me aghast.”
 And he, as skilled each thought to penetrate,
 “Here it is meet thou leave all dread behind,
 ‘Tis meet that thou all fear annihilate ;
 We to the place have come where thou wilt find,
 E’en as I said, the people sorrow-fraught,
 Those who have lost the Good Supreme of mind.”
 Then me, his hand firm clasped with mine, he brought
 - With joyful face, that gave me comfort great,
 Within the range of things in secret wrought.
 There sighs and tears and groans disconsolate
 So sounded through the starless firmament,
 That I at first wept sore for their sad state :
 Speech many-tongued, and cries of dire lament,
 Words full of sorrow, accents of despair,
 Deep voices hoarse, and hands the air that rent,—

These made a tumult, whirling through the air,
 For evermore, in timeless gloom, the same,
 As whirls the sand the storm drives here and there.
 And I, upon whose brain strange wildness came,
 Said "Master, what is this that now I hear,
 And who that race whom torment so doth tame?"
 And he to me "This wretched doom they bear,
 The sorrow-smitten souls of those whose name
 Nor foul reproach, nor glorious praise did share.
 Mingled are they with those of evil fame,
 The angels who nor rebels were nor true
 To God, but dwelt in isolated shame.
 Heaven, fearing loss of beauty, spurned that crew,
 Nor were they suffered in the depths of Hell
 Lest to the damned some glory might accrue."
 And I, "O Master, what doom terrible
 Makes them lament with such a bitter cry?"
 And he, "Full briefly I the cause will tell:
 No hope have these that they shall ever die,
 And this blind life of theirs so base is shown,
 All other doom they view with envious eye.
 Their fame the world above leaves all unknown :
 Mercy and Justice look on them with scorn ;
 Talk not of them, one glance and then pass on."
 And as I looked, I saw a standard borne,
 Which, whirling, moved with such a rapid flight,
 It seemed to me all thought of rest to spurn.
 And in its rear a long train came in sight
 Of people, so that scarce I held it true,
 Death had undone such legions infinite.
 And when among the crowd some forms I knew,
 I looked, and lo ! I saw his spectre there
 Who Life's great chance behind him basely threw.
 Forthwith I understood and saw full clear,
 These were the souls of all the caitiff host
 Whom neither God nor yet His foes could bear.
 These wretched slaves who ne'er true life could boast
 Were naked all, and, in full evil case,
 By gnats and wasps were stung that filled that coast ;
 And streams of blood down-trickled on each face,
 And, mingled with their tears, beneath their feet
 Were licked by worms that wriggled foul and base.

And when I further looked on that drear seat,
 On a great river's bank a troop I saw,
 Wherefore I said, "O Master, I entreat
 That I may know who these are, what the law
 Which makes them seem so eager to pass o'er,
 As I discern through this dusk air and raw."
 And he to me, "Of this thou shalt know more,
 When we our footsteps on the pathway set
 That runs by Acheron's melancholy shore."
 And then with eyes where shame and awe were met,
 In fear lest he my words, displeased, should mark,
 Till we the river reached, I spake not yet.
 And then, behold ! toward us came a bark,
 Bearing an old man, white with hoary age,
 And crying, "Ho, ye cursed spirits, hark !
 Hope never ye to see Heaven's heritage.
 I come to take you to the other coast,
 Eternal gloom, fierce heat, and winter's rage.
 And thou, whoe'er thou art, thou living ghost,
 Withdraw thyself from those who come as dead."
 And when he saw I did not leave that host :
 "By other ways, by other ports," he said,
 "Thou wilt that region reach, not here : received
 In lighter bark than mine thou shalt be led."
 Then spake my Leader, "Charon, be not grieved ;
 This is There willed, where Will and Power are one,
 Nor question what should be at once believed."
 Then quiet were those cheeks, with beard o'ergrown,
 Of that old pilot of the livid lake,
 Around whose eyes two fiery circles shone.
 But those poor souls whose naked forms did quake,
 Changed colour when they heard his accents hoarse,
 And gnashed their teeth, and then blaspheming spake
 On God and kith and kin their bitter curse,
 Mankind, the place, the time, and all the race
 They drew their birth from to its furthest source.
 Then drew they all together to one place,
 With bitter weeping, on that evil shore,
 Which waits each soul that fears not God's high grace.
 And Charon, fiend with eyes that flamed all o'er,
 With signs and nods around him gathers all,
 And strikes each lingering spirit with his oar.

And, as in autumn time the sere leaves fall,
 Each after other, till the branch, left bare :
 Yields to the earth its spoils funereal,
 So likewise Adam's evil offspring fare :
 They from that shore leap, beckoned one by one,
 As falcon to its lure sweeps down through air,
 So they o'er those dark waters swift are gone,
 And ere o' the further side they disembark
 On this another troop together run.

“ My son,” my kind guide's accents bade me hark,
 “ Those who beneath the wrath of God have died,
 From all lands gather to this region dark,
 And eager are to pass across the tide,
 For God's stern justice so doth spur them on
 That fear becomes desire unsatisfied.

But never passeth here a guiltless one :
 If therefore Charon vex his soul for thee,
 What his words mean will now to thee be known.”

So ended he ; then shook exceedingly
 That gloomy region, so that still my fear
 Bathes me with sweat, though but in memory :
 The tearful land sent forth a blast of air
 Whence there flashed forth as lightning vermeil bright,
 Which not one organ of my sense did spare :
 I fell, as one whom slumber robs of sight.

CANTO IV.

THERE came to break that deep sleep of the brain
 A peal of thunder that awakened me,
 As one whom force to rouse him doth constrain ;
 And, with mine eyes thus rested, I to see
 Turned me, stood up and steadfast looked around,
 To know the region where I chanced to be.

In very deed upon the brink I found
 Myself, of that abyss and vale of woe,
 Where thunders roll of ills that know no bound.

Dark was it, steep, o'erclouded so below
That, though I sought its depths to penetrate,
Nought to mine eyes its form did clearly show.
"Now pass we down to that world desolate,"
Began the poet, pale as if with fright.
"I will go first; thou shalt as second wait,"
And I, who had that change of hue in sight,
Said, "How shall I go, if e'en thou dost fear,
Whose wont it is my doubting to set right."
And he to me, "Their anguish who dwell there
My face with pity's pallor overspread,
Which to thy thought as terror doth appear.
Onward, for long the way we have to tread."
And so he passed, and made me enter in
Where the first circle girds the abyss of dread.
And here, so far as hearing truth might win,
No other plaint rose up than that of sighs,
That ever rose the tremulous air within.
This from the sorrows without pain did rise
Endured by those vast multitudes and great,
Which infants, men and women did comprise.
Spake my good Master, "Ask'st thou not their fate,
Who are these spirits that thus meet thy view?
Ere thou pass on, I will thou know their state,
That they sinned not; if they have merits too
These, lacking baptism, nothing help alone,
Gate this of that one Faith thou holdest true.
And if they lived ere Christian creed was known,
They did not rightly serve the Almighty Sire;
And of this number I myself am one.
Through these defects, not other guilt, the ire
Of God, as lost, we bear, no further pained,
And without hope live ever in desire."
When I heard this, great grief my heart constrained
Because some persons good and great I knew
Who in that outer *limbo* were detained.
"Tell me, O Lord and Master, tell me true,"
So I began, in eager wish to know
The faith which every error doth subdue,
"Did ever any by his merits go,
Or by another's, hence, and then was blest?"
And he, who knew what lay my speech below,

Made answer, "I was but a new-come guest,
When here I saw a Mighty One descend,
And on his brow the conqueror's crown did rest ;

He bade our great Sire's spirit with Him wend,

Abel his son, and Noah too did bring,

Moses, law-giver, faithful to the end,

Abraham the Patriarch, David too the King,

Israel with all his children and his sire,

Rachel, for whom he bore such suffering,

And others, whom He placed in Heaven's blest choir ;

And thou should'st know that human spirits none,

Gained before these the bliss our souls desire."

Not for his speaking ceased we to pass on,

But tracked the pathway through the forest dense,—

Forest, I say, whose trees were souls each one.

Not long had we our journey made from thence,

This side the pit's mouth, when I saw a flame,

Which pierced through hemisphere of gloom intense.

Some distance were we still when that sight came,

Yet not so far but I discerned in part

That those who dwelt there were of honoured fame.

"Thou who dost honour knowledge and each art,

Say who are these who in such greatness dwell,

It sets them from the common herd apart ? "

And he to me, "That fair fame honoured well

Which in thy life above there thou dost know,

Gains grace in Heaven which makes them thus excel."

Meantime a voice I heard which sounded so :

"Give honour to the Poet loftiest :

His shade returns that left short while ago."

After the voice was silent and at rest

Four mighty shades I saw towards me move

With looks that shewed as neither pained nor blest.

Then spake to me the Master whom I love ;

"Look thou on him who walks with sword in hand,

Whose place among the three his state doth prove :

See Homer, sovran poet of our band ;

Horace comes next for biting satire known,

Ovid the third, and Lucan last doth stand.

Because with me they all are so far one

In that great name they spake with one accord,

They do me honour ; well that deed is done."

Thus saw I gathered round that worthiest lord
 Of loftiest song the goodly company,
 And he o'er others, like an eagle, soared. 96

And when in converse some short time passed by,
 They to me turned with sign of greeting kind,
 And he, my Master, smiled as pleased thereby; 100

And yet more honour they to me assigned,
 For they received me as their comrade true,
 And I was sixth amid that might of mind. 104

So step by step towards the light we drew,
 Speaking of things it is as good to keep
 In silence, as the speech was I then knew. 108

We came where nobly rose a fortress steep
 Seven times encircled with a lofty wall,
 Guarded by streamlet flowing fair and deep. 112

O'er this we passed as though 'twere dry ground all;
 And with those sages I through seven gates went;
 We reached a field where fresh green grass grew tall: 116

A group was there with eyes sad, grave, down-bent;
 And power to rule was on their faces traced;
 Seldom they spoke, in sweet tones eloquent. 120

So moving on one side our feet we placed
 On open ground, high, full of light and clear,
 And all were seen who that fair region graced. 124

There straight before me, lo! the forms appear,
 On the green sward, of spirits great and wise,
 Whom to have seen makes me myself revere. 128

I saw Electra with her fair allies,
 Hector and brave Æneas there I knew,
 Cæsar all armed, with falcon-like keen eyes, 132

Penthesilea and Camilla too
 I saw, and with them Latium's ancient king,
 Who, with his child Lavinia sat in view. 136

Brutus I saw who Tarquin forth did fling,
 Cornelia, Marcia, Julia, Lucrece nigh,
 And all alone Saladin wandering. 140

When I to gaze a little raised mine eye,
 The Master I beheld of those that know
 Sit 'midst his wisdom-loving family: 144

On him all gaze, to him all reverence show.
 There Socrates and Plato saw I pass,
 Who near him stand while others move below,

He whose thoughts framed from Chance the world's great mass,
 Thales and Zeno and Empedocles,
 Diogenes and Anaxagoras,
 And Heraclite and Dioscorides,
 Collector true of every quality,
 Orpheus and Linus, Tullius joined with these,
 Sage Seneca and Euclid's science high,
 Averroes, who the far-famed Comment wrote,
 Hippocrates and Galen, Ptolemy
 And Avicen,—far more than I can note,
 For my full theme bids me so quick pursue
 That oft beneath the fact my poor words float ;
 That group of six now dwindles down to two ;
 My wise Guide leads me by another way,
 Out of the calm, where trembling breezes blew ;
 And I pass on where no light pours its ray.

CANTO V.

FRANCESCA DI RIMINI.

AND I began, "O Poet, I am bold
 To wish to speak awhile to yonder pair
 Who seem so light upon the storm-blast cold ;"
 And he to me, "Thou'l see them when they are
 More near to us : then pray them by that love
 That leads them : they will to thy call repair."
 Soon as the wind their forms to us doth move
 My voice I lift : "O souls sore spent and driven,
 Come ye and speak to us, if none reprove,"
 And e'en as doves, when love its call has given,
 With open wings and still, to their sweet nest
 Fly, by their will borne onward through the heaven,
 So from the baird where Dido was they pressed,
 And came towards us through the air malign,
 So strong the loving cry to them addrest ;

"O living creature, gracious and benign,
 Who com'st to visit, through the air so swarth,
 Us, whose blood did the earth incarnadine :
 Were He our friend who reigns o'er Heaven and Earth,
 We would pray Him to grant thee all His peace,
 Since our ill fate thou deem'st of pity worth ;
 Of that which thee to hear and speak shall please
 We too will gladly with thee speak and hear,
 While, as it chances, now the wild winds cease.
 The land where I was born is situate there
 By the seashore to which descends the Po,
 To rest with all that to him tribute bear.
 Love which the gentle heart learns quick to know
 Seized him thou seest for the form so fair
 They robbed me of—Ah ! still I feel that blow.
 Love, who doth none beloved from loving spare,
 Bound me to him with such intense delight
 That still, thou see'st, 'tis with me everywhere.
 Love led our steps together to death's night ;
 Caïna him who quenched our life doth wait."
 These words were borne to us, and as aright
 I heard these souls thus bound in woeful state,
 I bowed my face, and so long kept it low,
 Till spake the Poet, "What dost meditate ?"
 When I made answer I began, "Ah woe !
 What sweet fond thoughts, what passionate desire,
 Led to the pass whence such great sorrows flow ?"
 Then I turned to them, and began enquire :
 "Francesca," so I spake, "thy miseries
 A pity deep that moves to tears inspire.
 But tell me, in the time of those sweet sighs
 The hour, the mode in which Love led you on
 Doubtful desires to know with open eyes ;"
 And she to me, "A greater grief is none
 Than to remember happier seasons past
 In anguish : this thy Teacher well hath known.
 But if thou seek'st to know what brought at last
 Our love's first hidden root to open sight,
 I'll do as one that speaks while tears flow fast.
 It chanced one day we read, for our delight,
 How Love held fast the soul of Lancelot ;
 Alone were we, nor deemed but all was right.

Full many a time our eyes their glances shot
 As we read on ; our cheeks now paled, now blushed ;
 But one short moment doomed us to our lot, 60
 When as we read how smiles long sought-for flushed
 Fair face at kiss of lover so renowned,
 He on my lips, as tremulous impulse rushed,
 Kissed me—and so with me for aye is bound,
 Writer and book were Galahad to our will :
 No time for reading more that day we found," 65
 And while one spirit told the story, still
 The other wept so sore that pitying, I
 Fainted away, as though my grief would kill,
 And, as a corpse doth fall, so then fell I. 70

CANTO XXXIII.

UGOLINO.

His mouth, uplifted from that fierce repast
 That sinner raised, and wiped it on the hair
 Of that same head which he behind laid waste,
 And then began "Anew thou bidd'st me bear
 The desperate sorrows on my heart that weigh
 Even in thought, while I from speech forbear,
 But if my words as seed their part shall play 8
 To bear the fruit of shame to him I eat,
 My tears and words shall mingled find their way.
 I know not who thou art, nor how thy feet
 Art led below, but as thy speech I hear,
 Thou seem'st to me a Florentine complete.
 Know then thou see'st Count Ugolino here, 12
 And this Archbishop Ruggieri is :
 Now list why thus such neighbour I appear.
 That through the work of evil thoughts of his,
 Trusting to him I was a prisoner made,
 And after killed—no need to tell thee this. 18

But what before thee cannot have been laid,
 That is, how sharp and drear my death hath been,
 Thou now shalt hear: then let my wrongs be weighed.
 A little window, that Hawk's cage within,
 Which now through me as Hunger's Tower is known—
 And many more its gates shall enter in—
 Through its small aperture to me had shown
 Full many a moon, when dream I dreamt o'er true,
 In which the future's veil aside was thrown.
 This man I saw as lord and chief pursue,
 Chasing the wolf and wolf-cubs on the hill,
 Which hideth Lucca from the Pisans' crew,
 With hungry hounds, well-trained, of eager will;
 Gualandi, with Lanfranchi and Sismondi,
 He had there set the foremost place to fill.
 A little while, and sire and sons were found,
 So seemed it, wearied out, and sharp teeth dread
 Upon their flanks made many a horrid wound.
 When I awoke, ere yet the morn was red,
 Still in their sleep I heard my children wail,—
 Who there were with me—crying out for bread.
 Full hard art thou if, when thou hear'st my tale,
 Thou griev'st not at my heart's foreboding cry.
 When canst thou weep if now to weep thou fail?
 Already they had waked; the hour drew nigh,
 Till which they had been wont for food to wait,
 And each one's dream caused sore perplexity.
 I heard the locking of the lower gate
 Of that dread tower, and then awhile I stared
 In my sons' faces, speechless, desolate.
 I did not weep, for all within grew hard:
 They wept, and then my Anselmuccio said,
 'What ails thee, Father? Why this fixed regard?'
 And still I shed no tear, nor answer made
 All that long day, nor yet the following night,
 Till the next sun was o'er the world displayed.
 And when there came a little ray of light
 Into the doleful prison, and I knew
 My own face, by four faces' piteous plight,
 Then both my hands in anguish I gnawed through;
 And they who deemed that hunger did constrain
 To eat, rose up in eager haste to sue,

And said, 'O Father, less will be our pain
If thou eat us ; thou didst these bodies clothe
With this poor flesh ; now strip it off again.'

Then I was calm their agony to soothe :
That day and then the next we all were dumb :
Why did'st thou not, O Earth, devoid of ruth,
Ope wide thy jaws ? When the fourth day was come,
Gaddo lay stretched before my feet and cried,
'Why, Father, help'st thou not?' and so, in sum,
He died, and as thou see'st me, so I eyed
The three fall down and perish one by one,
The fifth day and the sixth, and then I tried,
Already blind, to grope my way alone,
And three days called them after they were dead :
Then even grief by hunger was outdone.

66

72

75

EPILOGUE.

TO THE RIGHT HON. W. E. GLADSTONE, M.P.

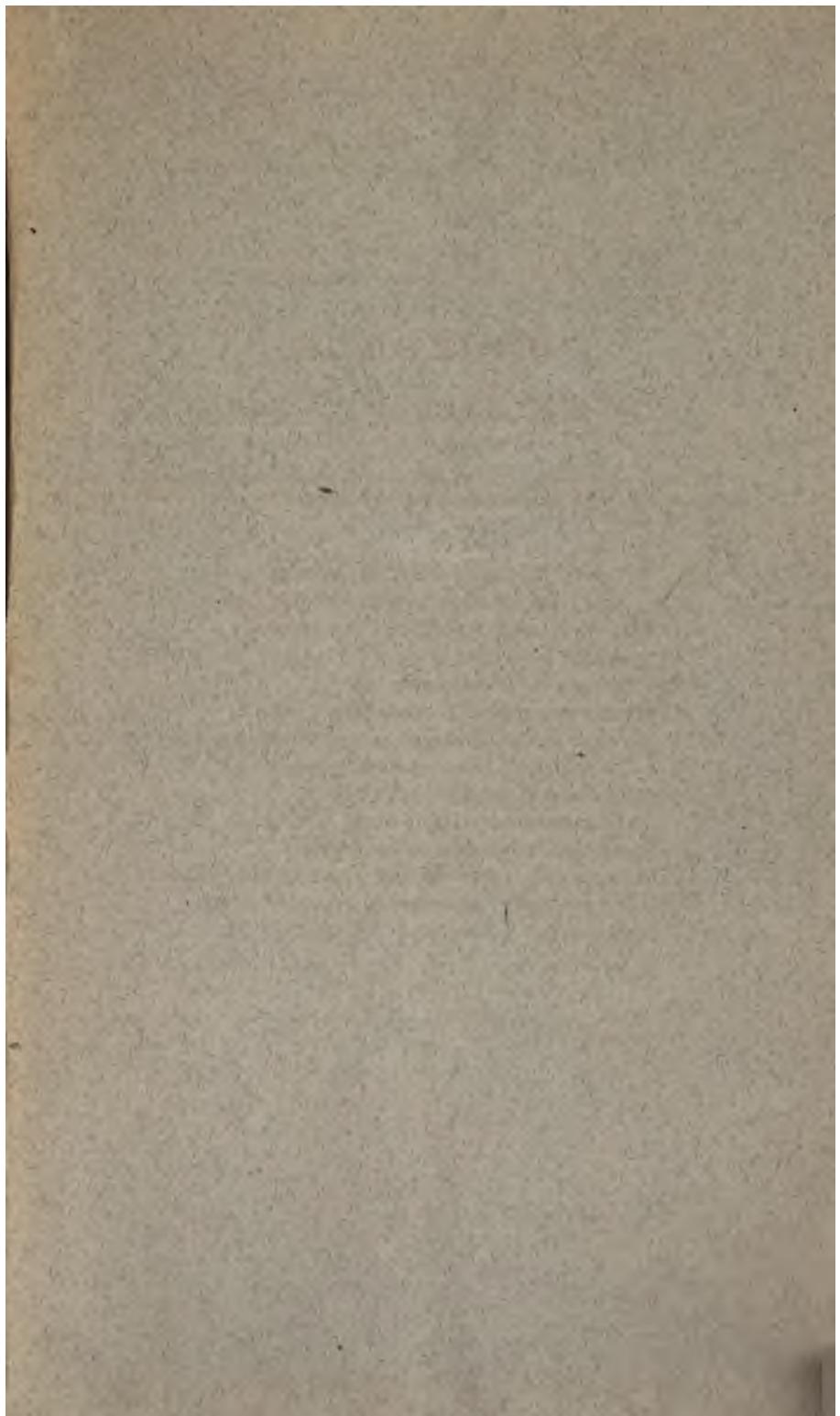
"In the school of Dante I have learnt a great part of that mental provision, however insignificant it be, which has served me to make the journey of life up to the term of nearly seventy-three years."

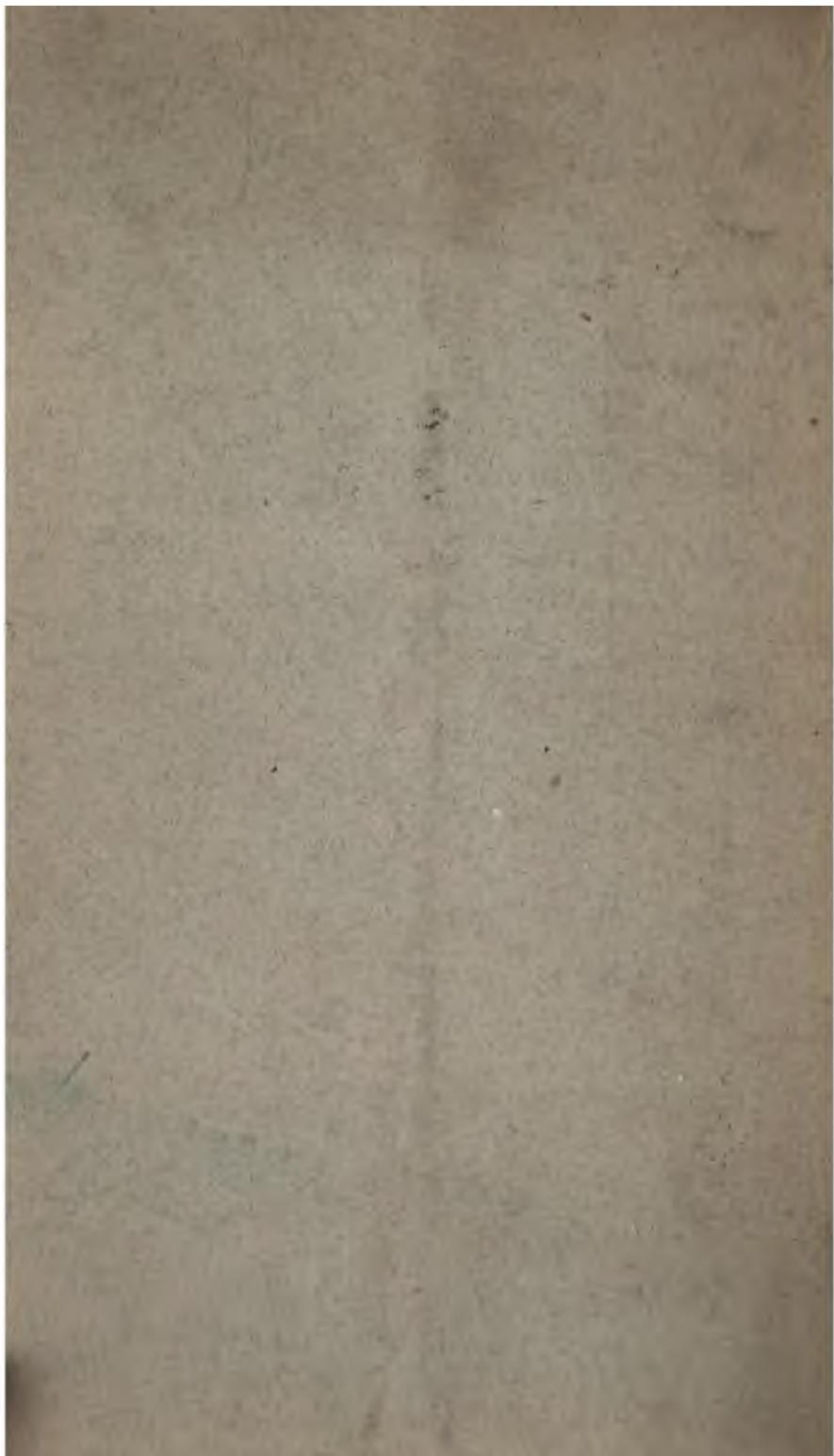
W. E. GLADSTONE.

NOT thine the exile's weary lot, to tread
The stairs of others as with bleeding feet,
Nor yet in lonely wanderings still to eat
The doled-out bitter gifts of others' bread :
Thine rather is it to have nobly led
When others halted or would fain retreat
To steer the State, though fierce the storm-winds beat,
On to the wished-for haven, sails full spread.
Unlike in outward fortunes, yet we trace
In thee and in our Dante many a line
Of inward likeness, sharing each the grace
Aye given to those who seek Truth's inmost shrine ;
The will that stands four-square to Fortune's blows,
Thoughts that age ripens, hope that wider grows.

ROME,

February 5th, 1883.







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